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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates how both marketing and advocacy are crucial skills to keeping the public aware of the library's impact. If marketing is promoting an individual library to increase public use, advocacy is broadcasting the purpose of libraries and the role of the librarian to garner public support. The issue of image of must be confronted, a professional image that has been diminished by insufficient salaries and a stereotyped image that is maintained by popular culture. Libraries and librarians can position themselves through marketing, including developing a public library Web site and designing promotional materials or using ready-made materials available through sources such as the American Library Association's (ALA's) Public Information Office. Librarians can get help in marketing by participating in large-scale advocacy efforts such as ALA's Campaign for America's Libraries, known by its familiar "@ Your Library" trademark; state libraries, public libraries, and ALA chapters have created marketing slogans by customizing the "@ Your Library" logo. In addition to developing partnerships, the following tasks can be added to the "how-to list" for marketing libraries and librarians: share stories of successes; announce needs by sharing bad news along with the good; create a better online presence; see each day as an opportunity to not only tell the public what you do and who you are; and market libraries by marketing yourself. (AEF)

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What's Marketing Got to do With It?

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Across the country, librarians are facing dire budget cuts. The governor of Florida recently recommended a state budget that would close the Florida state library, eliminating the positions of fifty-five employees and making inaccessible a collection of one million items. [1] In California, the Ventura County Library may lay off twenty seven staff members and reduce hours of service at branches in response to the loss of half of its expected revenue from the state Public Library Fund. [2] Reports of similar staff cutbacks and reduction of library services are filtering in from Colorado, Hawaii, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Virginia, and, now, Texas. [3] During times of economic stress, the public needs libraries more than ever. During times of economic threats, librarians need marketing more than ever.

Marketing refers to all of the activities—both inside and outside the library-- that librarians follow to let the public know about library services. Marketing can be directed in-house to library users or tailored to users external to the library's facilities. For example, librarians market their collections in-house through book displays and author visits and externally through book review columns in local papers.

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If marketing is promoting an individual library to increase public use, advocacy is broadcasting the purpose of libraries and the role of the librarian to garner public support. Advocacy includes affirming core principles of librarianship, such as intellectual freedom and activities like lobbying legislators to support library initiatives. Advocacy reminds the public those libraries' historical roles in supplementing community education impact local culture and economy. Both marketing and advocacy are crucial skills to keeping the public aware of the library's impact.

Let's consider what librarians do well. Librarians create inviting public education spaces for the traditional library markets of students and leisure reading browsers. They are also successful at gathering to share best practices and communicate their concerns with each other. Twenty-five thousand of the sixty-three thousand members of the American Library Association (ALA) flock to annual conferences. The Texas Library Association annual conference is recognized as the exemplar of state library conferences, both in attendance, the quality of its programs, and the professionalism with which the event is organized. Librarians are more apt to be absent at gatherings outside of our familiar circles, events that may provide opportunities to inform both users and non-library users.

The Image Issue

The strong professional cohesiveness among librarians is in stark contrast to the anxiety they feel about their own image. No group feels this stress more acutely than students entering graduate programs of library and information science. Students typically describe their motivation to enter the profession as aspirations of combining a love of learning with public service. Amidst the need to acquire the vocabulary of a new

profession and fulfill the requirements of both required and elective courses, new students must also come face to face with one of the great obstacles to library advocacy: a professional image that is quietly appreciated by those who take advantage of our services but is diminished by insufficient salaries and an image of comical rigidity and primness that is maintained by popular culture. Stereotypes of the prim and proper librarian not only denigrate the new professional but also diminish our professional history.

A hundred years ago, librarianship was known as library economy. Library school graduates embodied library spirit, a life-long dedication to demonstrating how libraries improve lives. For young educated woman, library work was an exciting career alternative to teaching, nursing, or social work. Early librarians responded to the call of library spirit by bringing library service to rural settings via horseback and into the poor houses and factories of urban America. These 'tender technicians' were obsessed with bringing order out of chaos and were rewarded for their efforts by becoming indispensable fixtures of community life. [4]

Overly attentive to their work, early librarians became frozen in a fashion vacuum, bequeathing both their orientation to detail and gentle disregard of personal self to succeeding generations of librarians. Over the years, public opinion exaggerated both librarians' necessary fastidiousness and their slow pick-up of fashion temporality. Like other feminized professions librarianship has been relegated to second tier status.

Public opinions are slow to change. All city services are facing reductions in support. While our stable supporters quietly acknowledge the increasing importance of the library in an information rich society, we continue to lose the image battle. What's

worse, we are starting to lose our critical mass. With their median age of 47 years, one in four librarians will reach retirement age (65) by 2009. [5] *Library Journal* recently predicted the retirement of half of the 125,000 current school librarians within the next 12 years. [6] We are at a critical juncture for marketing the profession. By strengthening professional cohesiveness through marketing we can more easily enact change. Public perceptions will not change overnight and we must change them one mind at a time.

How to Position Your Library and Yourself Through Marketing

Librarians often build marketing into specific services, such as summer reading program events, so that it is sometimes difficult to separate a marketing activity from the service. What libraries might not do consistently is to examine or develop a system-wide marketing approach.

A public library Web site is perhaps one of the cheapest ways to market your library. By offering a wide variety of information resources about your city, such as recreational activities around town, and employment, the public will equate this usefulness with the library. A typical Web site should also have an ever-changing section that advertises the activities of the library; it should have maps of important locations around the city (including the library) and photos of these places and events. A "Did You Know" section of the lesser-known services the library provides, or a similar themed section that deals with odd and interesting reference questions would be eye-catching and would perhaps contribute to changing perceptions. Anything that will keep the attention of a user will inevitably impact the library beneficially. For those who are intimidated by website design, most HTML editor software packages come with easy to understand useful tutorials that could be shared with library patrons as well.

Many libraries design their own promotional materials but ready- made materials are available through sources such as ALA's Public Information Office (http://www.ala.org/pio). ALA units also create useful marketing resources. The Public Library Association, for example, distributed popular "Ask Me Why I Love My Job" buttons at its annual conference in Phoenix in 2002. Librarians can get help in marketing by participating in large-scale advocacy efforts such as ALA's Campaign for America's Libraries, known by its familiar @ Your Library trademark. State libraries, public libraries, and ALA chapters have created marketing slogans by customizing the @ Your Library logo. Here's a summary of how the @ Your Library campaign has expanded.

1. Drive to Read @ Your Library

Corporate partners in the Campaign for America's Libraries are supporting theme-based promotions. Morning Star Foods Inc. co-sponsors Drive to Read @ Your Library with ALA. Teens are invited to write essays describing heroes in books. Librarians can submit entries to the Librarians in the Driver's Seat contest that recognizes librarians who promote the Drive to Read program locally. The 2003 winners will travel to Miami to meet the winner of the 2002 Daytona 500. The Drive to Read Web site is located at www.hersheymilk.com/events/drivetoread.

2. Join the Major League @ Your Library

ALA and Major League Baseball are teamed in the Join the Major League @ Your Library promotion. Libraries who develop local promotional efforts may compete with winners attending the Major League Baseball All-Star Game, the World Series, and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Sharon Robinson, children's book author and daughter of baseball great Jackie Robinson, is the point person for this campaign as

Major League Baseball's Vice President of Educational Programming. The Join the Major League's Web site is www.ala.org/@yourlibrary/jointhemajorleagues.

3. Put it in Writing @ Your Library

Women's Day Magazine partners with ALA on the Put it in Writing@ Your Library campaign. Librarians participate by hosting author/writing workshops and will contribute to a new online book club. Unpublished women writers can submit essays to a national contest. Winning essays are published in Women's Day. The program Web site is www.ala.org/@yourlibrary/putitinwriting.

4. The Path to Homeownership Begins @ Your Library

ALA and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage provide ten libraries with grants to plan public seminars on home buying under The Path to Homeownership Begins @ Your Library. Sharable program materials are located at http://www.ala.org/rusa/wellsfargo.

ALA divisions are developing their own interpretations of the Campaign for America's Libraries. Academic librarians who attend the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) National Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina will be invited to join the Campaign. Academic libraries interpret their campaign goals to:

A. promote awareness of the unique role of academic and research libraries and their contributions to society;
B. increase visibility and support for academic and research libraries and librarians;
C. help librarians better market their services on site and online;
position academic and research librarianship as a desirable career opportunity. [7]

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) will launch their campaign later in 2003 at their national conference in Kansas City.

International librarians are also finding a role. ALA and the International Federal of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) collaborate to recruit countries around the world to translate the @ Your Library campaign materials for the Campaign for the World's Libraries. Nineteen countries, from Armenia to Turkey, have joined the campaign since 1991.

In addition to developing partnerships, we can add the following tasks to our `how-to list for marketing libraries and librarians

*Share stories of your successes.

*Announce your needs by sharing bad news along with the good.

*Create a better online presence.

*See each day as an opportunity to not only tell the public what we do, but who we are.

*Market libraries by marketing yourself

Our professional stories are not only accounts of what happens within institutional walls but also what we bring to the workplace and beyond. Marvin Scilken, founder of The U*N*A*B*A*S*H*E*D Librarian newsletter said that every story can be a library story. [8] Each librarian has an unexpected story as well, one that we can tell to advocate for librarians and recruit new professionals to the field. In times of duress there is as natural inclination to contract our image along with contracting services. Now is the time to employ marketing in all of its many aspects. To paraphrase TLA President-elect Eva Poole, now is the time to remind the public that librarians and libraries are vital, visible, valuable and essential.

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